

## Study day, 15 oct 2008

### Greece and the world: Artistic exchange and influence from 1800 to the present day: some lectures

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### Swedish Memories of the Parthenon: A fragmentary history

*By Magnus Olausson, Nationalmuseum*

Facing the Royal Palace in Stockholm lies the National Museum of Fine Arts – the largest museum of fine arts in Scandinavia. It was designed by the German architect Friedrich Anton Stühler and was completed in 1866 after an unusually lengthy period of building. One may wonder what connection this Venetian palace can have with Athens and the Parthenon. There is nothing in its exterior to suggest classical Greece. If one enters the great vestibule, however, and mounts the staircase to the upper storey, one will soon discover that the stairwell is framed by a plaster cast of the Parthenon Frieze. This formed part of the major acquisition of plaster casts for the inauguration of the building undertaken by the royal sculptor, Johan Petter Molin, at the official behest of the Swedish Riksdag. It was produced by the London company of Domenico Brucciani. If one disregards a caryatid from Erechtion and some of the prone figures from the gables of the Parthenon, the majority of the casts were copies of the most famous classical Roman sculptures, many of them known and recognised as belonging to the "canon" of masterpieces since the Renaissance.

The one exception is the Parthenon Frieze, which was probably incorporated into the building by its architect, Stühler. In the Neues Museum, the somewhat earlier sister museum he also

designed, one principal motif in the monumental stairwell is provided by its hall of caryatids. Stühler's role in the selection of the fixtures in the National Museum with their explicit allusions to Athens and the buildings on the Acropolis can probably not be underestimated. It is indeed in German, Danish and English architecture that we find repeated use of famous motifs from Classical Greece. On the other hand this iconic inheritance is conspicuously absent from Swedish architecture of the same period. The Doric interest that arose in Sweden in the 1780s was instead the outcome of *voyage pittoresques* to southern Italy and lacked links with Greece. Even so, there are early points of contact with the Parthenon itself in Sweden's history.

Remarkably enough it was the daughter of a vicar of Nyköping, south of Stockholm, who was to become the most famous witness of the tragic occurrence on 26 September 1687 when the Parthenon was badly damaged by the explosion of a Turkish gunpowder store after being hit by the artillery of the Venetian besiegers. Her name was Anna Agriconia and she happens to have been the aunt of my grandmother's great-great grandfather. Four years after this event she was ennobled; probably the only woman in Swedish history to be so, even though the name she took, Åkerhielm, was that of her brother. How did Anna Agriconia come to witness this dramatic moment? The explanation can be found in her friendship with Countess Catharina Charlotta De la Gardie, whose companion she became for a number of years. Since 1684 Countess De la Gardie had been married to the Swedish Field Marshal Count Otto Wilhelm von Königsmarck, who at the same time became commander-in-chief of the Venetian army in its war against the Turks. The campaign in the Peloponnese was intended to regain the bases the Venetians had previously lost in the eastern Mediterranean. The 15,000 mercenaries recruited in Germany and Königsmarck's staff and immediate retinue included no fewer than 70 Swedish officers and men. In other words Anna Agriconia was not the only Swedish witness of the catastrophe in September 1687, although it was her description in a letter to her brother and her entries in her journal that were to become famous.

The prelude to this event was the embarkation and landing of Königsmarck's army in Piraeus on 20 September. Today Venice displays a highly visible reminder of this operation in the form of the famous marble lion transported westwards by the Swedish naval captain Baltsar von Clinckow. It was only much later, in 1794, that the Swedish diplomat and antiquarian J.D. Åkerblad made the intriguing discovery that the classical lion had been provided with a coil of runes and a dragon's head, carved into it five centuries earlier by Vikings. After the

landing Athens was occupied immediately and the Acropolis besieged. This soon turned out to be no easy undertaking as its walls served as fortifications and was to prove ill-fated in view of what ensued when the siege artillery was deployed four days later. It was grenade discharged from a mortar that pierced the roof of the Parthenon on 27 September and caused such great destruction. The risk can hardly have been unknown. According to Anna Agriconia, Field Marshal von Königsmarck had tried to avoid the catastrophe “but to no avail: the bombs achieved their effect and the [beautiful] temple that once existed can never be restored.” After eight days under siege the Turks surrendered. When Anna wrote to her brother a month and a half later she has been able to study the results of the bombardment: “all you can see here now is in ruin and everything is strangely dilapidated in the fortress where our bombs have done their work. The whole temple and the wonderful marble buildings are almost a pile of stones. From what still stands and all that has collapsed one can conclude that Jacob Spon’s description was tolerably correct.”

The writer Anna Agriconia is referring to here is the French physician Jacques Spon who together with Sir George Wheeler published *Voyage d’Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grece et du Levant fait des années 1675 et 1676*, (Lyon 1678-80). In connection with her visit to the Acropolis she had also found a “strange manuscript” which she deposited via her brother with Uppsala University Library in 1693. It cannot today be identified with any certainty. It was also in connection with the capitulation that Anna took care of an orphan girl called Elemina, who accompanied her to Stade. When christened, she was given the name of Charlotta.

Anna Agriconia was captivated by Athens. She admired its fine buildings, which meant both Greek and Turkish. Among its sights she singles out “the Lantern of Demosthenes”, i.e. the Tower of the Winds. Her description of the city’s inhabitants would fit well with Edward Said’s definition of orientalism: “to tell the truth you can find nobody dwelling here who knows as much about their own ancestors as strangers do. I wish that M. [Johan] Rabel [Königsmarck’s secretary in Stockholm] and my Brother were here with a number of their peers to begin what once existed again.” Anna Agriconia repeated the same idea in her next letter: “the Greeks themselves know little of all this but strangers who have read their history [know] more.” Even so she had found a cicerone in a native “doctor of medicine who is descended from Pericles and somewhat knowledgeable about these matters.” The French consul Giraud had also contributed what he knew. We would, however, have learnt more about Anna Agriconia’s impression of all these artistic treasures if the countess had not fallen

ill and spent a long convalescence in Athens: “nothing has been written of the antiquities and everything else I have seen there because of the grave bout of measles her grace has endured.”

One curiosity she does refer to, nevertheless, is the conversion of a mosque that had rapidly been transformed into a Lutheran church once the Venetians had given their consent. Otherwise according to Field Marshal von Königsmarck “no Lutheran soldier would raise his musket if not allowed to worship”.

After Anna Agriconia Åkerhielm’s visit there are few Swedish descriptions of Athens. There is, however, a remarkable account from just over a century later. In July 1794, Count Carl Axel Löwenhielm, secretary of the Swedish legation to Constantinople, arrived in Athens. He lived in a house close to the ruins of the Stoa of Attalos. Löwenhielm came into contact with Fauvel, the artistic agent of the French ambassador, an amateur archaeologist entrusted with the task of making plaster casts of the reliefs in the Parthenon. In his journal he records that “Ayant soit par hasard, soit exprès, enlevé une tête & un bras à un Thessalien, je voulus en faire l’acquisition – mais je n’obtiens que la tête.” Löwenhielm was recalled the following year and one of his posts was as Chamberlain to the new queen Fredrika. In 1799 he donated the head to the Royal Museum, where during the following year it was displayed to King Gustav IV Adolf. Many scholars have speculated on which of the heads in the National Museum’s collections it may have been. This one (NMSk 142) has been proposed, for instance. The idea has been refuted by later experts as its proportions do not match. It is in fact 29.5 cm. high, which is impossible as Löwenhielm states explicitly that “his” head was taken from the reliefs on the southern wall of the Parthenon which portrayed the “battle of the Centaurs, Lapiths and Thessalians”. In that case it must be a head from a metope, and as a rule they are 18 cm. There is, however, another fragment of sculpture in the National Museum’s collections that can be linked to the Acropolis and the Parthenon: a female head called “Deianeira”. This is 32 cm. high. It comes from the Drottningholm collection, where it is referred to for the first time in 1744 as acquired in the 17<sup>th</sup> century through “Count Königsmarck”. In other words we are back where we started with the campaign of 1687. Was this head one of the objects found by Anna Agriconia and Countess von Königsmarck among the debris in the Acropolis? We can only speculate, but the tradition is interesting in itself and not impossible if we remember that the countess was the niece of Karl X Gustav and the recipient was his wife, the dowager queen Hedvig Eleonora, the owner of Drottningholm and also therefore the donor’s aunt by marriage. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was claimed that the

head surmounted by a diadem must have belonged to one of the female figures on the gable panels. Both the goddess of the sea Amphitrite on the western panel and Lachesis, the goddess of fate, on the eastern panel have been proposed. Whether or not this is correct can be discussed. The provenance of the head is, however, interesting and highly trustworthy.

As has already been shown, Swedish memories of the Parthenon are indeed highly fragmentary. In contrast to other western European countries, it has never played a major role in Sweden. The reasons for this can be discussed. It is likely that Greece and Athens were felt to be far too remote for 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish travellers – a destination that was at least as exotic as the Orient. It was simpler to commission a plaster cast from Domenico Brucciani in London than to view what still stood on the Acropolis. Remarkably enough the same feeling can be discerned during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was preferable to travel to southern France, Italy or Spain than to Greece. For this reason the Stig Borglind's etching of the Acropolis or Sixten Lundbohm's studies of Greek colonnades are unusual intermezzos in the history of modern Swedish art.

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## **Canova and the Parthenon Marbles**

*by Giuliana Ericani, Museo Civico di Bassano del Grappa*

“Again in this period of the life of such a great craftsman, those knowledgeable in art will see progress towards excellence, deriving clearly from the fact that, during his most recent journey, he had at his ease contemplated the Phidias marbles in the British museum. What he said about them upon his return; the benefit he drew from them; the devotion with which he continued to admire these models, all give rise to a number of thoughts and considerations. He himself agrees with what some pointed out to him: the further advance in his art and the greater visible perfections in some of his works, after his return from London.”

Thus Leopoldo Cicognara in his 1823 biography of Antonio Canova, which – together with his entire *Storia della Scultura* – was re-issued last year in an anastatic re-print by the Bassano Istituto di Ricerca su Canova e il Neoclassicismo that houses all the artist's drawings and written records. The scholar would go on to mention how Canova himself had identified a certain piece with the phrase “the period of that work was after my return from London..”

The work referred to was an idealised head of Beatrice. This had originally started out as a portrait bust of Juliette Recamier, and Cicognara described it in words which would have had the whole-hearted approval of Canova himself:

“One began to examine that soft and breathing flesh, the beauty of conception and execution in that head. I say ‘of conception and execution’ because I think one can make out that high dignity of comportment which, at one and the same time, is both celestial and gentle; which means that one only has to see a similar woman in flesh and blood just once for one’s inner being to be penetrated and overwhelmed.... Just as can occur to someone upon seeing your marble sculptures. There is no trace of the harshness of the material, which is easily forgotten. Instead there is an almost new type of imitation of the Natural. With the skill of a great artist who conceals all the artifice of art, you draw upon fine, gentle, simple Nature; the ingenuous imitation of the real transpires even from the very porosity of the marble. (What has been eliminated is the overly conventional that one sometimes sees in the modern arts when they study the works of Antiquity or what is vulgarly called “The Greek Ideal”). Comparing this work with others that you made in that precise period of your life, after your study of the whole development of art amongst the peoples of the Classical world, one might almost claim to see a clear and unfailing demonstration of what you had always had as your aim – an aim that was further confirmed by your visit to London. That is to say, the realisation that the works of Phidias mark the highest point in the imitation of Nature. Adopting more daring and conventional lineaments and technique, the works of Praxiteles and Lysippus force what one might call the outside skin of art towards greater perfection. However, they remain inferior in the simple sublimity achieved through the ingenuous expression of the natural...”

Cicognara’s words give theoretical expression to the ideas Canova had outlined on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1815, a few days after his visit to Holland House, which at the time housed the marbles Lord Elgin had brought to London. In a famous letter to Quatremère de Quincy, whose substantial work *Juppiter Olimpion ou l’arte del la sculpture antique* had been published the year before, the Veneto artist wrote:

“Here I am in London, dear friend, a surprising capital with beautiful streets, beautiful city squares, beautiful bridges – and of great cleanliness. And what is most surprising of all is that everywhere one sees signs of the well-being of humanity. I have seen the marbles from Greece. I already had a good idea of the bas-reliefs from prints and from

a few plaster casts and even a few pieces in marble. However, of the large-scale figures, in which the artist can exhibit his real skill and knowledge, I knew nothing. If it is true that these works are by Phidias, that he directed their execution and actually finished them himself, then these works clearly show how the great masters were the true imitators of *la bella Natura*. There was nothing about them which was affected, which was exaggerated or harsh; in short, nothing of those aspects that might be called the conventional and geometric. I would conclude that the innumerable extant statues which exhibit those exaggerations must be copies made by the numerous sculptors who reproduced the fine works of Greece to send them to Rome. Phidias's works are real flesh. That is, they are of the same *bella Natura* as the most excellent of ancient sculptures – because the Belvedere Mercury is flesh, as is the Torso, as is the Dying Gladiator, as are the numerous copies of Praxiteles' Satyr, as is the Cupid of which fragments are to be found all over the place, as is Venus. (A Venus in this royal museum is really of true flesh.) I must confess to you that the sight of these beautiful things has stirred by my own self-regard, because I was always of the opinion that the great masters must have worked in this way and no other. They all have well-shaped forms and flesh, because men have always been made of yielding flesh and not of bronze. That observation is enough to make sculptors decide to abandon any form of rigidity, to keep to the beautiful soft clay of Nature."

These thoughts put forward by Antonio Canova constitute a sort of poetics, they are the affirmation of certain fundamental theoretical concepts. In effect, they reiterate the principle of the imitation of Classical models as expounded by Winkelmann – that is, based on resort not to gesso casts or prints and copies but to the few pieces of actual Greek sculpture then to be found in European collections.

In the mid-1970s Massimiliano Pavan cited the above letter in two ample studies (in the "Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Archaeologia e Storia dell'Arte" and the "Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti") and in a book on the Parthenon itself. In each case he stressed that the importance of its contents had "never been adequately pointed out" – a judgement one could repeat today – and illustrated the role played by the Parthenon marbles as European Classicism gave way to Romanticism. Pavan observed that "Canova's insistence on 'the imitation of *la bella Natura*', on 'real flesh' as opposed to 'convention and geometry' or any form of 'rigidity' reminds one of the issues raised by the rationalistic criticisms of the sculptor's work advanced in 1806 by the critic Fernow. At the same time, they tell us a lot about why the Romantics (and not

only Stendhal) had such a high opinion of Canova.” In effect, the critic continues, the ideas advanced by Canova lead, on the one hand, to the “idealised exaltation of the heroic” that one finds in writers from Lessing to Kant, and can also be seen as “central to the phase one might identify as pre-Romantic”. The vision of the Greek world was shifting from Winklemann’s Rome to Greece itself, to the direct observation of Greek works.

In his detailed studies Pavan charts how the arrival in London of the Elgin’s marbles stimulated great debate, with the gesso copies that then spread to St. Petersburg and other capitals throughout Europe resulting in a change in the prevailing artistic poetics of the day. However, that is not what I want to stress here. Instead, in the light of Pavan’s fundamental study of those poetics, I wish to look at how the artistic language of Canova and of Italian sculpture developed after 1815.

A drawing from the Riva Collection now in the Bassano Museum shows an idyllic image of the Parthenon at the end of the seventeenth century, when Europe was again beginning to take an interest in Greece. This drawing, with explanatory text in Veneto, – together with another accompanied by an Italian text (now in the Bonn Kunstmuseum) – were the source for the engraving (without legend) that Felix Perin produced for Omont’s text *Voyage à Athenes, Constantinople et Jerusalem de Fr. Arnaud (1602-1605)* which was reprinted in the early years of the twentieth century. Dated 1670, the Bassano drawing belongs to an important phase in the European ‘cultural rediscovery’ of Greece. These were years in which J. Spon undertook a journey to Athens and the Levant to describe the extant monuments and, in a spirit reminiscent of Renaissance humanism, transcribe inscriptions; the account of that ‘meeting of cultures’ would then be published in Lyons in 1678 under the title *Voyage d’Italie, de Dalmatie, de Grèce and de Levant*. (A few years later, in 1682, Spon’s travelling companion, George Wheler, would publish his own account in London, entitled *A Journey into Greece*.) In 1674, the painter Jacques Carrey, travelling as part of the retinue of the Marquis de Nointel, had already made a drawing of the Parthenon which was published in Paris in 1675 in De Guilletiere’s *Athènes Ancienne et Nouvelle*. Such travels and on-site inspection can be said to have opened the way to Lord Elgin’s removal of the marbles at the end of the eighteenth century; indeed, that operation was preceded by Choiseul-Gouffier’s more minor dispatch of material to the Louvre. In both cases, the key fact was the explosion of the Turkish arsenal within the Parthenon



on 26 September 1687, which had resulted in the destruction of the pediments and thus opened the way to the late-eighteenth-century removals.

Let's go again to Canova and the Parthenon marbles.

With regard to the resort to Nature that Pavan identifies as part of Canova's artistic praxis, this is definitely more substantial after 1815. As early as 1806, in fact – in a letter to Quatremère de Quency containing his reaction to Fernow's criticism that his work was inspired by considerations of the 'graceful' – Canova had outlined how he understood the resort to Classical models in the creation of work: "To be a great artist one must do more than steal a bit here and there from ancient works and then cobble them together without any sense or judgement. One has to study the examples of the Greeks day and night, imbue oneself with their style, absorb it into one's mind and thus develop one's own style while having before one's eyes *La Bella Natura* itself, in order to read within it the same precepts."

His refusal to undertake the restoration of the Elgin marbles is yet further proof of a respect and sense of empathy with Phidias's work, which from 1815 onwards would leave its mark on Canova's style and art. In his reply to Lord Elgin, in fact, the sculptor would say: "I admire in them [the marbles] the truth of Nature combined with the achievement of fine form. Everything here so clearly breathes life, with the most exquisite artifice. There is not the slightest affectation and the splendour of art is veiled with the most admirable skill. The nudes are real and of the most beautiful flesh." Strangely enough, that admiration is not reflected in the sculptor's sketchbooks: of the over 3,000 drawings from Canova's Roman studio – left to the Bassano Museum by Giambattista Sartori Canova – there is not one record of an encounter that was fundamental to the artist's reflection upon his own poetics. I would suggest that there is an entire sketchbook that has not come down to us.

However, in the works produced after the year 1815 there are two aspects that reveal Canova's admiration for the Greek works: the changes in the way he modelled his figures' drapery and his interest in designing equestrian compositions of horse and horseman.

As his own writings indicate, this first aspect was an issue to which Canova had dedicated great attention from his earliest works. And the fact that some of the female figures in the Parthenon frieze influence this handling of drapery is clear when one compares certain details in the Stuart and Revett drawings with the drawings in the Ec

sketchbook (181-1380) and F3 album (57-1577), which would be used in the 1815 sculpture of *The Protestant Religion*.

As for the design of equestrian monuments, this began in the first decade of the century with long work on the idea of a monument to Napoleon. Ultimately, it would find concrete expression the two equestrian monuments to Carlo III and Ferdinando II in Piazza Plebiscito in Naples – works in which one can see the influence of the Elgin groups upon certain phases of the design process.

The comparison of certain details in the Stuart and Revett drawings and in the Omont illustrations with the drawings in Canova's Ec sketchbook (161-1360) is rather illuminating here.

The technical premises developed would bear fruit in the works created by sculptors of the following generation. And though their achievements are very different to Canova's own, they reflect the pre-Romantic spirit that can be said to have started with him.

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## **The making of an Exhibition: “Modern Greece” at the Bavarian National Museum and “Athens – Munich: Art and Culture in Modern Greece” at the National Gallery –Alexandros Soutzos Museum in Athens**

*By Marilena Z. Cassimatis, National Gallery, Athens*

*The Making* The Greek 19<sup>th</sup> century is the century par excellence of conversing with history in political terms, as well as in terms of shaping national awareness, starting with the identification in the European mind of Greece with antiquity. In the absolute monarch King Ludwig I of Bavaria, the philhellenic movement found a champion who, not only loved the Greek artistic output, but moreover included philhellenism in the official political agenda of his newly established kingdom. Highlighting these two-way relationships, one on the ideological-aesthetic level and the other on the political level, along with all the issues they entailed, gave rise to an ambitious exhibition jointly organized in Munich and Athens. In the past, two exhibitions only had showcased the Bavarian philhellenism, both in Munich: “Bavarians in Greece” [“Bayern in Griechenland”]<sup>1</sup> in 1967 and “The Dreamed Nation” [“Die erträumte Nation”]<sup>2</sup> in 1993.

When the great powers recognized for the first time, in the 1827 London Convention, the political existence of Greece, the refusal of the Porte to accept the resolutions resulted in the Battle of Navarino, the defeat of the Turkish-Egyptian fleet and the recognition of Greece's autonomy – not independence. The arrival of the Governor Ioannis Kapodistrias in the temporary capital, Aegina, in 1828, could only lay frail foundations for the establishment of a

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the book by Wolf Seidl, *Bayern in Griechenland*, Munich 1965 (2nd ed. 1981).

<sup>2</sup> Complete exhibition title: “Die erträumte Nation, Griechenlands Wiedergeburt im 19. Jahrhundert. Bilder und Dokumente zu den bayerisch-griechischen Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert”, curated by Reinhard Heydenreuter, Jan Murken, Raimund Wünsche, Munich 1995.

new state. His assassination, in September 1831, brought about the inevitable anarchy and enabled the three protecting powers – England, France, Russia – to impose absolute monarchy. The Treaty of London, in 1832, achieved recognition of the Greek independence by the Porte, significantly reducing the territories of the new kingdom in the process, though. The coronation of Otto, second son of King Ludwig I of Bavaria, as King of Greece happened at the same time. On [25-1] 06-02-1833, the new king, still underage, disembarked in Nafplio, then temporary capital of the new kingdom, which comprised the Peloponnese, Continental Greece and the Cyclades. Otto was accompanied by a Council of Regency.

These are all elements of the emergence of the Modern-Greek kingdom under Bavarian hegemony. How is this, historically very interesting, period represented in the visual arts? How to document through an enormous amount of material the “Bavarian version of the European neoclassicism that became the ‘bridge’ that mentally associated Modern Greeks with the once polychrome remains of the past” as aptly phrased by Prof. Niki Loizidi in her article “Neoclassicism: The Bavarian Identity of Modern Greece” in an Athenian newspaper?<sup>3</sup> Is it not true that the unexpected affinity between the former Catholic duchy of Bavaria (Kurfürstentum Bayern), and, since 1806, the kingdom of Bavaria by Napoleon’s grace and the former Ottoman province of the Orthodox south-eastern Europe constitutes a “historical paradox” as Professor Kitromilides argues in his essay in the exhibition catalogue *Two “Neoclassical” Kingdoms in the Era of Nationalism”*?<sup>4</sup> This affinity involved two main factors: The dynastic one – two kingdoms under the Wittelsbach house in central and south-eastern Europe – and another, extremely important factor, which, alas, proved ephemeral and which resulted from the ideological and political affiliations of the two states and was related to the neoclassical outlook that flourished in German culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

No less than 32 organisations, museums, public and private collections in countries including Germany, Italy, Denmark, Austria, and of course Greece, as well as 52 authors of catalogue essays and entries worked together to realise one of the most ambitious exhibition programmes undertaken in recent years by the National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum (represented by this author) in collaboration with the Bavarian National Museum (represented by the then Director, Reinhold Baumstark, and his assistant curator, Dr. Herbert W. Rott).

After intense consultations and intensive inventorising of future exhibits, the first difficulties reared their ugly head. Namely: It had been agreed that the exhibition would be divided into sections with specific historical references. For the German team (Baumstark and Rott), these references would be no other than the hegemonic presence of the house of Wittelsbach in Greece, with everything that this implies, the activities of architects and painters for building the new capital of the Greek state through neoclassicism and, conversely, the influence of neoclassicism in establishing the new “Athens on the Isar River”, that is, Munich. Any art historian would regard a similar topic as an excellent opportunity for development. The Greek side, namely this author, raised the issue of the indispensable retrospective to the historical events leading to the establishment of the Modern-Greek state, that is, the Greek War of Independence, reference to which should definitely be made, firstly because the European philhellenic movement, particularly in Bavaria, would otherwise be impossible to grasp in all its scope and secondly because that would obviously provide interesting visual elements to the reference to classicism proposed by the Germans as well as de facto required. The cooperation

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<sup>3</sup> *To Vima* newspaper, Sunday 2-7-2000.

<sup>4</sup> Exh. cat.: *Athens-Munich: Art and Culture in New Greece*, curated by Marilena Z. Cassimatis, National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum, p. 33-37.

of the National Historical and Ethnological Museum was therefore sought, and under the watchful eye of its tireless director, Yannis Mazarakis-Ainian, one of whose ancestors had been a member of Otto's Senate, the main guidelines were now set.<sup>5</sup> Also decisive was the contribution of the Benaki Museum through its curator, Fani-Maria Tsigakou, specialized in matters of European philhellenism.

The overall aim of this project, in other words, was to highlight two prevalent issues in exhibitions of this kind. That is, to raise awareness of this inextricable interweaving of myth and collective fantasy with what we usually call "historical reality", as well as to probe how these could be, if not explained, at least seen in a new light. Our goal was ultimately achieved; the section on the Greek War of Independence and its prelude was included in our list of topics, along with a few others: The policy of the great powers, the policy of the (loathed) regency that supervised the Otto, still a minor, and the eviction of the royal couple in 1862. This eviction was one of the most sensitive topics of our joint exhibition, and the reason is not readily understood by "Republican" Greeks: Descendants of this dynasty still live today in the now "kingless" Bavaria, and they would certainly not take kindly to the National Museum of Bavaria "exposing", particularly using political cartoons of the times, one of its members' ousting from the throne.

In its 12 sections, the exhibition traces the emergence and development of the new kingdom through selected art works and historical documents.

1. Ludwig, Crown Prince of Bavaria, and Antiquity
2. Athens, the new capital
3. Munich, Athens on the Isar River
4. Fervour for Greece
5. Uprising for freedom. Greece before 1821
6. The Greek War of Independence
7. The paintings of Peter von Hess
8. The policy of the great powers
9. Regency and governance
10. Otto and Amalia: The monarchical presence
11. The discovery of the Greek landscape
12. Rebellion and the ousting of the King

The two exhibitions, after all, were two twins, if not homozygous, born from the same womb, even if they sometimes resembled those other famous two twins from the Bible, Isaac and Jacob, who exchanged blows with each other in Rachel's womb. It was mutually agreed for

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<sup>5</sup> In his introductory note for the German catalogue *Das Neue Hellas, Griechen und Bayern zur Zeit Ludwigs I.*, Munich 1999, p. XVIII, the director of the Bavarian National Museum highlights its contribution, as well as that of this author, as determining factors in Athens for the realisation of the exhibition.

the exhibition to start in Munich, at the National Museum, which had carried out a necessary building expansion for that reason. The exhibition was inaugurated on 11-09-1999 with an official ceremony. It was attended by the then prime minister of Bavaria, Edmund Stoiber, and the then President of the Hellenic Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos; the exhibition was under their auspices. In Athens, the exhibition was inaugurated on 04-05-2000 by the then President of the Federal Republic, Johannes Rau. In Munich, attended by so many Greeks and modern-day philhellenes, the exhibition met with great, unexpected success. The catalogue, spectacularly designed by Munich's Hirmer publishers, featured 12 introductory essays and 472 annotated and illustrated entries, a total of 627 pages. The Greek version, which adopted the design of the German one, contained 297 entries and 17 introductory essays, some in both languages, others, such as the one by Kitromilides, unfortunately in Greekonly.

I will briefly discuss the above sections, commenting, when necessary, on the works they feature:

### **1. Ludwig, Crown Prince of Bavaria, and Antiquity**

Ludwig (25) Unlike the typical royal figure, the 32-year-old is depicted here as a Roman general of idealized features. He is already the antiquity-loving politician.

(26) Ludwig's obsession with antiquity begins in 1811, when Hallerstein and Cockerell "discovered" a significant number of fallen and damaged statues of the east and west pediments of the Temple of Aphaia, which they acquired from the notables of the island. In 1812, they were sold to Ludwig at auction on Zakynthos.

(27)-28 Aegina Sculptures

### **2. Athens, the new capital**

The designation of Athens as the capital city is credited to Ludwig in 1834. A town in decay, Athens numbered a mere 8,000 inhabitants. There was, however, the Acropolis rock, then still a fortified, inhabited Upper Town, with a densely built Lower Town, studded with ruins. Only the Acropolis and the Thesseion testified to ancient glory.

31 Here is documented the history of the birth of the earliest plan for the new Athens, emblematic of Eduard Schaubert's activity in Athens.

32 Drawing for a verdant, neoclassical city adapted to the Mediterranean climate, with visual axes.

33 Beyond the realistic design, the German spirit is dominated by idealism (Klenze, architect-painter), with great freedom. The Propylaea according to Stuart and Revett, and the recently rebuilt temple of Athena Nike.

34 Here is the realistic view of the area around the Acropolis.

35 The Palaces. This proposal was made in 1836 on the orders of the Crown Prince of Prussia, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Otto's brother, Maximilian, and addressed to Schinkel. The intention was to associate the House of Wittelsbach with Cecrops and his castle on the Acropolis. The plans, designed with Teutonic thoroughness, were thankfully not implemented, having being

rejected by Ludwig. There was great difficulty in getting these drawings for this exhibition. It was made possible thanks to the Hellenic Cultural Foundation in Berlin.

37 This unique model was specifically made for this exhibition by German craftsmen. The idea was Baumstark's.

38 The actual palace, a voluminous, rhythmically patterned building, with minimal neoclassical decorations.

39 A composite building (not implemented) that would have combined the functions of an archaeological museum and a school of Fine Arts.

40 Commissioned by Otto, a Catholic church, which the city had been missing. His only work that materialised, if at a smaller scale, in 1860–64.

41 Three buildings –Academy, University, Library– in a frontal arrangement on the “Boulevard”, along with the Eye Clinic and the Catholic church.

42–45 University, the first one.

46–47 Panorama.

48 Buildings by Ludwig in Munich: the Palace, the Glyptothek, the Valhalla. And back to reality: A work by Klenze, the Propylaea enclosed the city to the west of Königsplatz. On the left, the Glyptothek, and on the right Ziehl's exhibition building.

56 Yet, Greek motifs also featured in highly refined interior decoration. Here, scenes by Hess from the liberation of Greece.

58 “Murder of Kapodistrias” is on the topic of the policies of the great powers. Making it possible to transport this large-scale work, which had never been on display in Greece before, required a major effort. Now also in Nafplion.

59 Unsurprisingly, special emphasis was placed in the Munich exhibition on the “Discovery of the Greek landscape”. The Greek landscape was appreciated as a reservoir of grandiose buried or damaged monuments of architecture and sculpture, the backdrop of a relentless struggle on land and sea. There existed also images, however, that captured the actual composition of the landscape. The most important works in this category are Rottmann's; a special display was recently dedicated to them in Munich's Neue Pinakothek. He travelled to Greece in 1834–1835 to make preliminary drawings for 38 sections of his output. Most of them were destroyed during the war.

## PAINTING

The descent of Modern-Greek painting, too, from the styles prevalent in the Royal Academy of Munich is now well-documented. Vryzakis, a pupil of Peter Cornelius, was clearly influenced by the epic-historical character of painting in Munich. His younger colleagues started off from Athens as pupils of, among others, Ludwig Thiersch.

## FINANCES

All major exhibitions also have major financial requirements. How did we deal with this question in Greece: It was one of the few times that the Ministry of Culture, under minister Anna Psarouda Benaki, had agreed to provide a substantial amount for the exhibition to the European Cultural Centre in Delphi, which was also tasked with the remuneration of the translator team of the Greek catalogue. The publication was finally sponsored by the always-willing National Bank of Greece. More funds were disbursed for the required successive trips to Munich and the project photography. Insurance premiums, transportation, and architectural design were covered by the National Gallery.

## LECTURES

Parallel events complemented this important exhibition: A series of six weekly lectures with discussions in cooperation with the Political Section of the Law School, University of Athens, the Institute of Constitutional History, architects, and others, received with great interest by the Athenian public.

A conference was organized by the European Cultural Centre in Delphi, whose minutes were published under the title *Establishment of Otto's State [in Greek]*.

The long-term benefits? Getting to know each other with colleagues in museums and collections in Munich facilitated cooperation for the National Gallery in a number of projects. The Academy of Fine Arts and the Institute of the History of Art jointly organized a series of symposia on the Academy's appeal in Europe. Greece was represented by this author on the topic of the prominent and enduring presence of Greek artists from around 1830 to date. The minutes were posted online, therefore at minimal cost and with universal accessibility. With my help, all artists of Greek origin – whether Greek nationals or not – were identified in the Academy's registry and were also made available online.

An exhibition to mark the bicentennial anniversary of the founding of the Munich Academy was recently organised. The National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum was invited to contribute with two works, a fact that underscores the recognition of the museum and of Greek artistic production.

I believe that the exhibition *Athens–Munich* was a landmark exhibition for the National Gallery – Alexandros Soutzos Museum. An awareness-raising exhibition for all historically thinking Greek citizens, but moreover one that fostered Greece's relationship with current developments in Europe and its involvement in the activity of a huge visual-art landscape catalysed through the cult of classical antiquity.

It has often been suggested that the neoclassicism of Munich, and generally the fervent antiquarianism of European philhellenes, contributed towards a “spectral” national-cultural identity that ultimately damaged the evolution of Modern Greece. In terms of culture, and art in particular, the Munich School has received a lot of criticism, being blamed for Greece's “delay” with respect to the Modernist aesthetic preoccupations. If, in place of Munich, Paris had become the metropolis of artistic life in Greece, things would not have been very different in my opinion. There might have been more Greeks trained in French academicism (or French symbolist movements), but certainly no major differences in the perception of form. Unless we prefer to view art in complete isolation from the conditions that shape and determine civilization.

Translated by Dimitris Saltabassis

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## **The brothers Joakim and Niels Skovgaard and the rediscovery of Greek art and culture**

*By Marianne Saabye, The Hirschsprung Collection, Copenhagen*

### **Elise Konstantin-Hansen in the garden of the royal palace**

In the autumn of 1895 a young Danish female artist, Elise Konstantin-Hansen, sat painting in the garden of the Greek royal palace here in Athens. She was very interested in the fine orange trees which, thanks to careful watering in the palace garden, bore extraordinarily beautiful, large fruits. She had been granted special permission to paint here – and one day she also had a distinguished visitor: the Greek King, who took a walk each day in the garden. She duly got up to curtsy to the King, but in her confusion she managed to knock over her painter's stool, box of paints and easel etc. The King promptly helped her to gather her things up again – and in the time that followed he often came back to see her work and to chat. They spoke Danish together, for King George I was a Dane. In 1863, at the age of 17, the young Prince Vilhelm, the son of the (later) Danish King Christian IX (known as 'the father-in-law of Europe') had been designated King of the Hellenes, a position he was able to hold for almost 50 years – until he was assassinated by a madman in Salonica in 1913.

### **King George I and Carl Bloch**

In connection with his accession (in 1864) George I had commissioned the Danish painter Carl Bloch to paint a monumental picture for the royal palace in Athens. The subject of the picture, *Prometheus Unbound*, as an allegory of the freedom struggle of the Greeks against the Turks. The picture, which had gigantic dimensions of just under 4 x 3 metres, with its dramatic – and in the Danish context quite unusual – neo-Baroque appearance, was decidedly a major work of Danish art; but it is unfortunately unknown today, as we do not know where it is. However, there is much to suggest that it was last seen in Denmark, and we have started a search to find the picture – but it would undeniably also be interesting to hear if anyone here in Athens knows of any pictures or photographs of the original placing of the painting in the royal palace.

### **Bindesbøll and Rørbye, and the Danish architects in Athens**

Carl Bloch was not the first Danish artist to be given official commissions in Athens. The architect Christian Hansen and his brother Theophilus Hansen had been there too – and had thus helped to influence the development and architecture of the city in the middle of the nineteenth century. The University by Christian Hansen, the Royal Mint, the Academy of Sciences, the



National Library, the Observatory by Theophilus Hansen, and the exhibition building the Zappion, were all the work of Danish architects (they were also deeply involved in the excavation and restoration of the Acropolis.)

But as early as 1835-36 the Danish architect M. Gottlieb Bindsbøll and the painter Martinus Rørbye had lived and studied in Athens (and in Constantinople). Rørbye made many drawings and painted many subjects from the Acropolis and the city of Athens, while the discovery of the polychromy of ancient art was of great importance to Bindsbøll and his design of the Thorvaldsen Museum in Copenhagen.



Martinus Rørbye: Greeks fetching water from the well at the Tower of the Winds in Athens, 1836  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 41,5 cm. Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

#### **1884: Joakim Skovgaard and Kristian Zahrtmann**

But the great rediscovery of ancient Greek art was not to come in earnest until the end of the nineteenth century. Immediately after New Year in 1884 the two painters Joakim Skovgaard and Kristian Zahrtmann boarded a ship that was to take them from Naples to Athens. For Joakim Skovgaard this was the first important encounter with antiquity and its architecture!

In August 1884 he wrote (on his return to Italy after his stay in Greece):

*“I appreciate immensely our journey to Hellas [...] I believe that all artists should travel to Hellas, even more than to Italy, for although the folk life of Italy is much richer, I have seen the most beautiful folk dancing in Corinth, and Greek art outshines all others. It was sheer pleasure to walk among the beautiful collections of sculptures and vases in Athens [...] and the Acropolis is matchless.”*

Kristian Zahrtmann expressed the same feelings. I quote:

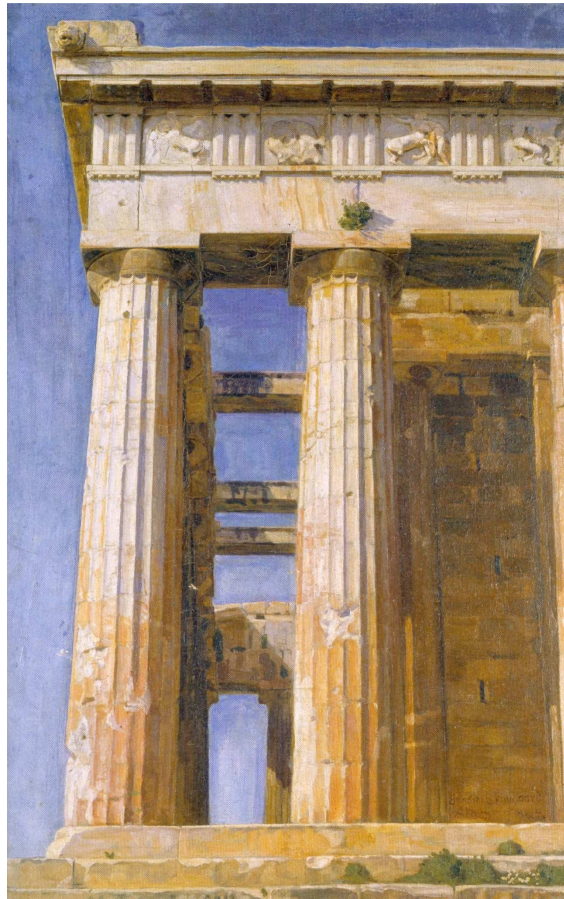
*“You should know what it is like to be here; there is of course nothing on the face of the earth that in any way compares with Athens. All other art must ‘fall to its knees’, indeed it shrinks to nothing – even Raphael only gazes towards the heavens, and yet he is among the most magnificent since the time of Christ [....] The Parthenon is of course the most splendid of all. Virginal, firm, huge. It fills you with awe like nothing else [....] But not only the great temples – no, even the tombs, from the magnificent ones of the rich down to the poor one of the little shoemaker’s family – vases, mirrors. Everything breathes the same joy in art [...]”*

These two quotations show that the young artists, despite their great commitment to Italian art and its masters, were now shifting the focus from the traditional basic Classical education to admiration of archaic and classical Greek art.

The two artists spent their days on the Acropolis. While Zahrtmann’s studies were mainly observations, Joakim Skovgaard painted a number of pictures characterized by a kind of close-up technique and great simplification, as well as a quite extraordinary, highly ‘translucent’ light that seems to make the great masses of stone weightless and transparent. These pictures, so clearly inspired by the experience of the southern light and the greatness of the ancient architecture, differ strikingly from Joakim Skovgaard’s earlier, naturalistic works – and in general from the Danish art of the period.

Alongside the outdoor work, Joakim Skovgaard spent much of his time at the Polytechnic, where the ancient vase collection was kept. At first it seems mainly to have been the vase paintings’ more genre-like or realistic depictions of everyday events that interested Skovgaard. There was thus an emphasis on the Attic red-figured vases from the fifth century BC.

Joakim Skovgaard, who was the son of the important Danish landscape painter Peter Christian Skovgaard, had been bought up and trained in classical art since childhood. Already during his time at the Academy of Art he had worked with the vases and the narrative forms of antiquity, and during his stay in Naples before the journey to Greece he had begun his copies of the motifs of the ancient vases. Kristian Zahrtmann too made some sketchier copies of the vase paintings, some of which he sent home to one of the Danish ceramists, Laurits Hjorth, who started up new production lines of copies (or adaptations) of the Greek vases, which became very popular sellers in those years. Another was the royal Terracotta factory, P. Ipsens Enke in Copenhagen. The first of these had the Grand Prix in Amsterdam I 1877.



Joakim Skovgaard: The southwest corner of Parthenon, 1884  
Oil on canvas, 60,5 x 40 cm. Ordrupgaard, Copenhagen.

The great quantity of vase drawings by Skovgaard could also in theory have been done as models for ceramic reproduction, but this does not seem to have been the case. During a later stay Skovgaard determinedly continued to copy vases. And everything indicates that it was quite simply a passion demonstrating his strong interest in penetrating to the soul of Greek art and culture – as shown not least by his interest in the rendering of figure scenes in the vase painting.

More than 60 of these drawings are now in the Hirschsprung Collection (acquired by Heinrich Hirschsprung in 1896-97) – and even though they are ‘only’ copies, they were done with such care and ‘delicacy that they have independent artistic value.’<sup>i</sup>

### **Niels Skovgaard’s first journey**

Four years later, in the autumn of 1888, we find Zahrtmann on a journey to Greece again, this time as a guide for a small group of Danish artists including the painter Niels Skovgaard, a younger brother of Joakim. From home, Niels Skovgaard had followed his brother’s and Zahrtmann’s interest in the Greeks; in 1884, as something quite new, he had begun working

with ceramics (with the potter Wallmann in Utterslev) along with a couple of other young artist colleagues (including Thorvald Bindesbøll, who with his personal style became Denmark's best counterpart to the Jugend and Art Nouveau style of the 1890s.)

Niels Skovgaard's studies were to be concentrated on the sculpture of early antiquity. At first he painted two pictures of a pair of recently excavated, very well preserved polychrome Koré figures. [from the the time before Phidias]. Skovgaard saw the trial erections of the sculptures, and in Zahrtmann's words it was as if he fell in love with them.

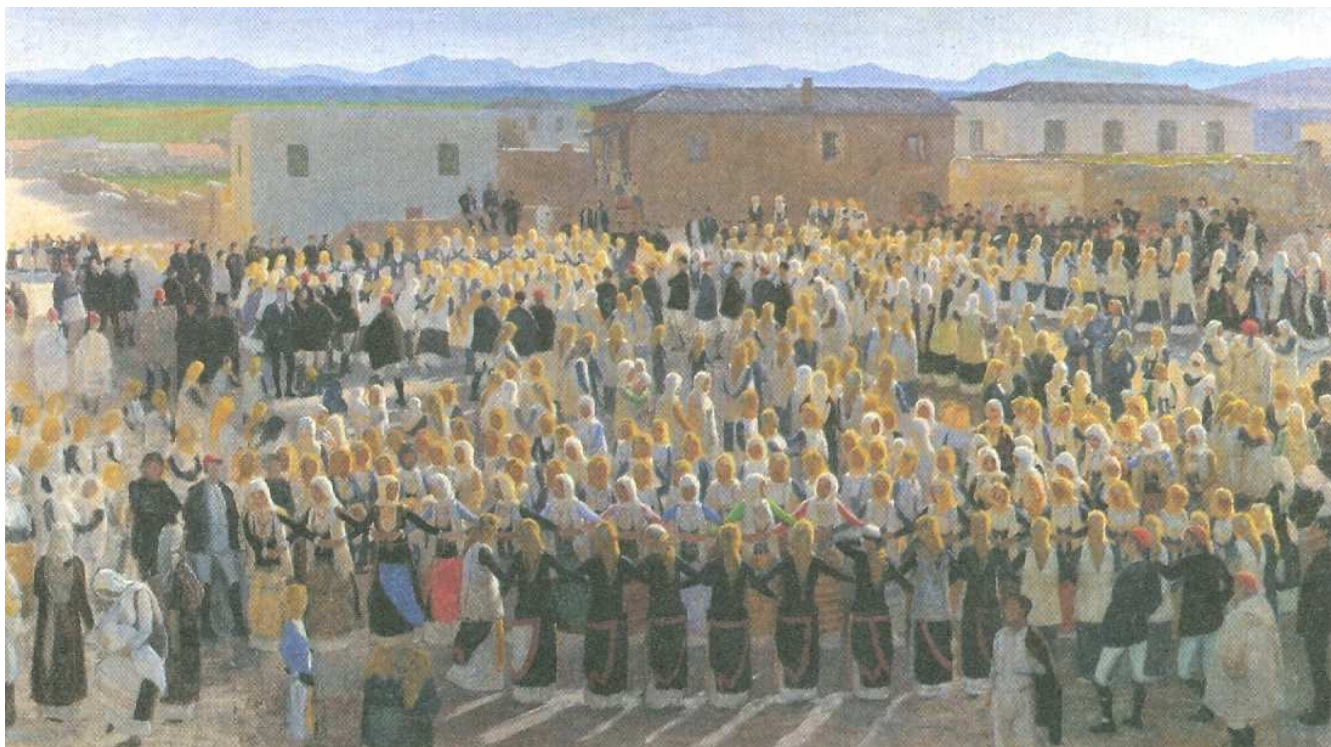
Greek sculpture was to preoccupy him for the rest of his life. At the beginning of 1889, before travelling home, he had paid a visit to Olympia – and later he worked in great detail with a reconstruction of the west gable of the Zeus temple. In 1902 he received support from the brewer Carl Jacobsen, the founder of the New Carlsberg Glyptotek, so that he could carry out detailed studies with a view to a new reconstruction of the West Gable, which was published in 1905.

Another benefit from the journey for Niels Skovgaard was his experience of the Greek women's chain dance, which he had seen in Megara, and he took home studies from which he made a larger painting that is now in Statens Museum for Kunst in Copenhagen. It was the monumental aspect of the repetition motif in the long chains of figures that fascinated him, as well as the light and the colours of the dresses.



Niels Skovgaard: Women's Dance in Megara, 1889.  
Oil on canvas, 53 x 94,5 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen.





Niels Skovgaard: Women's Dance in Megara, 1923  
Oil on Masonite, 93,5 x 202, 5 cm. Skovgaard Museum, Viborg.

## 1894-96

In 1894-96 Niels Skovgaard went back to Greece. He had recently married, so this was a combined honeymoon and study trip that he took with his wife and their mutual friend the painter Elise Konstantin Hansen, of whom I spoke at the beginning.

During a stay on Naxos, Skovgaard painted the view from their living quarters and with Elise Konstantin Hansen's help positioned himself and his pregnant wife centrally in the picture, observing the landscape in the strong backlight of the sunrise.

But it was first and foremost the resumed studies of the dance motif in Megara that preoccupied Skovgaard on this trip. The family stayed in Athens, but in the Sundays and on holidays Niels Skovgaard went to Megara to make studies from the dancing women, which he considered to be the surviving tradition from the ancient Greece. The dancing women was sisters of the Acropolis kores he had painted. It was a difficult job, as far as the women were not aloud to stand as models, which means he had to catch the impressions, when they were moving and to keep it in his memory. He worked on there with the motion of the chain dance and at the same time made detailed studies of the beautiful, colourful costumes. In connection with this journey he made a big painting in tempera – and later on back in Denmark in 1910 he returned to the theme and in 1923 he painted his final version of the Tatra-dance .Looking back on these different paintings it tells a story of the battle between Naturalisme and the of the monumental

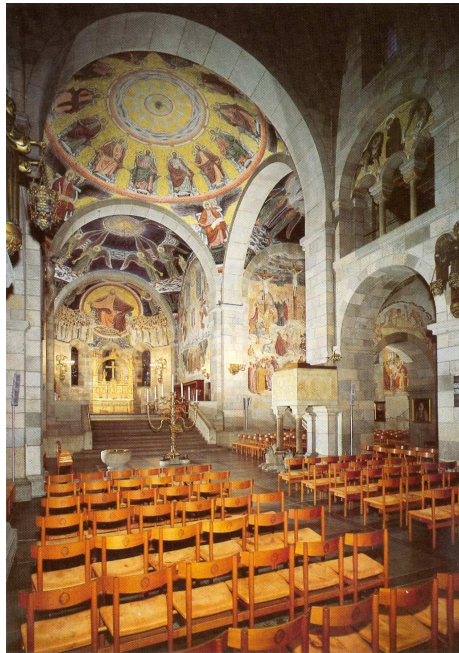
simplicity in and an archaicising presentation. Many of these studies and the final painting belongs to the Skovgaard Museum in Viborg, in Jutland.

### **Joakim Skovgaard's second journey and Viborg Cathedral**

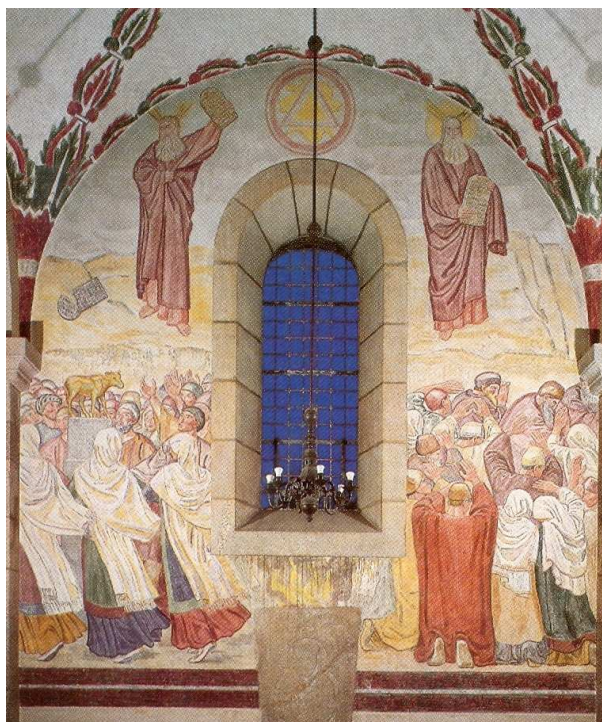
During the stay there in Megara the family was visited by the brother of Niels, Joakim Skovgaard. He had been asked by the Danish Ministry of Culture to submit a draft proposal for a complete decoration of the original, large medieval cathedral in Viborg, which had been renovated. Joakim Skovgaard was to deliver the first draft for the whole decoration in 1897, and he went on an extended study trip with the aim of preparing himself for the huge task he faced. In Italy he studied the early Renaissance painters and their church decorations with their particular narrative form. While this was a dominant factor, in his efforts to get back to an archaizing from he also went back to archaic Greek art and to the simplified, narrative figurations of the vase painting. Again he painted water-colours of the vases in Athens. And in Megara, like his brother, he studied the Greek folk life, not least the costumes, which he regarded as an original form and tradition that could be traced back to Biblical subjects.

In an altarpiece with the subject *Christ Leading the Thief into Paradise*, 1890, in the Hirschsprung Collection, one can glimpse the Greek inspiration especially in the presentation of the angels.

The huge task of decorating Viborg Cathedral with frescoes lasted many years – until 1906; [the big collection of the large cartoons for the subjects were acquired by Heinrich Hirschsprung for the museum's collection – and among the many subjects and scenes – here the well known scenery from The Old Testament, the dance around the golden calf - one sometimes sees how the inspiration from Greek folk life enters into a symbiosis with impulses from the Italian Renaissance - and Nordic traditions.



Joakim Skovgaards frescoes at Viborg Cathedral, (View of the Alter) 1899-1907. Viborg



Joakim Skovgaards frescoes at Viborg Cathedral, (The dance around the golden calf) 1899-1907. Viborg

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## Summary

Advertising for a lost masterpiece in Danish art: Carl Bloch's *Prometheus unbound*, 1864, painted for The Royal Palace in Athens.- Short presentation of a few Danish artists and architects in Athens from the 1830'ies. - The painter Martinus Rørbye and the architects M.G. Bindesbøll, Christian Hansen and Theophilus Hansen.

The great rediscovery of ancient Greek art was not to come in Danish art until the end of the nineteenth century. In 1884 the two painters Joakim Skovgaard (1856-1933) and Kristian Zahrtmann (1843-1917) travelled to Athens. Joakim Skovgaard wrote: “ *I believe that all artists should travel to Hellas, even more than to Italy, for although the folk life of Italy is much richer, I have seen the most beautiful folk dancing in Corinth, and Greek art outshines all others.*”

In 1888 Zahrtmann returned to Greece together with Niels Skovgaard (1858-1938). Both brothers were back in Greece in the middle of the 1890’ies.

Joakim Skovgaard studies was during the first stay concentrated on the architecture of Acropolis and the “genrepaintings” of the antic vases.

After studies of archaic sculptures in Athens Niels Skovgaard among other places went to Megara, where he was very fascinated by the scenery of the dancing women, which should be an important theme in his painting.

In 1896 Joakim Skovgaard returned to Greece to prepare himself for the big commission he had received to make the entire decoration of the Viborg Cathedral . His studies was concentrated on finding some relations between the themes from the Bible, the archaic Greek art and the old transmitted folkloristic traditions.

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## **Greek embroideries in the collections of William and May Morris**

*By Mary Greensted (University of Birmingham)*

I feel I have to start with an apology because I am only at the beginning of my research on *Greece and the Arts and Crafts Movement*. This is very much work in progress but I hope that this paper will provide an introduction and overview of the project.

The Arts and Crafts Movement had its roots in England in the late 1870s and 1880s. It was a reaction against the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the environment, on people’s working lives and on the end-products of mechanised industries. William Morris – writer, poet, designer, and socialist – set out the ideas and practices that shaped the Movement in England. He emphasised the importance of functional design and the use of nature as the source for all pattern. A rich and colourful decorative style developed using a wide variety of materials and reviving long-forgotten techniques. Much of the power of the Movement however came from its strong social and moral purpose. Morris and the next generation of



architects and designers, the generation born in the 1850s and '60s, believed passionately that an involvement in creative manual work - whether as a professional or an amateur - could improve an individual's quality of life.

Numerous craft workshops were set up. One of the most important was the Guild of Handicraft set up by the architect C R Ashbee with the primary purpose to provide craft training and employment for young working class men in London's East End. The workshop produced leatherwork, silver, jewellery and furniture. One example of the Guild's furniture, a mahogany cabinet with inlaid decoration designed by Ashbee in 1898, illustrates the impact of the Movement. This cabinet was the centrepiece of the 1900 Secession exhibition in Vienna and had a profound influence on the work of designers such as Josef Hoffmann in Germany. The Arts and Crafts Movement was taken up by much of the English speaking world including the United States, and by Austria and Germany. But it also had an impact in countries such as Norway, Finland, Hungary and Poland; newly-emerging states which used the ideas of the Arts and Crafts Movement to help to establish a national identity.

Until recently I curated one of the most important English Arts and Crafts Movement collections at Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum. Over the years I have noted links and similarities between the English Arts and Crafts Movement and cultural developments in Greece and I am now just starting the process of researching them. I want to begin by illustrating some of these links.

British Arts and Crafts architects were at the forefront of the research and documentation of Byzantine architecture in late 19<sup>th</sup>-century Greece. Following the establishment of the British School at Athens in 1886, wealthy philhellenes in Britain funded scholarships for young architects to travel to Greece. Among those who came were the young Scottish architect, Robert Weir Schultz, and his friend, Sidney Barnsley. Their travels, undertaken between 1887 and 1891, were extensive and included Mistra, Megalopolis as well as Attica. Their drawings, photographs and notebooks are now preserved in the British School at Athens. They published a major work on the monastery of Osios Loukas, north-west of Corinth, which is still an important source for scholars. Both men went on to work on architectural projects influenced by their Byzantine work. Probably the best known example is Schultz's St Andrew's Chapel of 1913, within Westminster Cathedral, the Roman Catholic cathedral in London.

The strong educational element of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England is also found in Greece. A folk art school was founded in Kalambaka specialising in woodcarving and on Rhodes in the 1920s a school was set up initially to train young men in the art of painting pottery. This was beginning of the Icaros Pottery, which took as its inspiration the Turkish Iznik wares found in homes throughout the island and which survived until the 1960s.

Theofilos Hadzimichalis was an itinerant painter working directly onto the walls of houses, tavernas and other public buildings at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is of interest to me not just because of his craft-based decorative approach and his enthusiasm for popular rural culture but also because of the fact he was discovered by the Paris-based art critic Strati Eleutheriadis, better known as 'Teriade' in the late 1920s, and promoted in a way that echoes the revival of traditional crafts by the Arts and Crafts Movement in England

Scholars, including Nicholaos Politis based in Athens and working from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, established a discipline of folk art studies in Greece. He was the inspiration for the Greek Folklore Society founded in 1908. Outside the capital such scholars included Kitsos Makris, whose former home in Volos is now a museum devoted to his collection of folk art, particularly pottery, metalwork and costume.

Much Greek embroidery was created as part of the traditional dress. As that fell out of favour in the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were attempts to ensure the survival of embroidery traditions. I am particularly keen to find out more about the Royal Hellenic School of Needlework founded here in Athens in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which played a role in this. Greek embroidery was known and appreciated in Britain and a number of important collections were built up by individuals including Louisa Pesel (her collection is now at Leeds University) and Thomas Sandwith, consul in Crete in the 1880s. Many of the pieces he collected are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

I have been looking at a small group of mainly Greek embroideries relating to William Morris (1834-96), the father figure of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and his daughter, May (1862-1938). Fundamental to Morris's approach to art and design was the belief that the artist must also be the maker so he learned and applied various techniques. Morris first tried his hand at embroidery in 1857, aged 23. According to his biographer, J W Mackail, Morris:

‘... was making his first experiments in reviving the decayed art of embroidery. He had a frame made from an old pattern, and worsted specially dyed for him by an old French dyer. He worked at this till he had mastered the principles of laying and radiating the stitches so as to cover the ground closely and smoothly. A piece of work he began then with a bird and tree pattern embroidered on it is still in existence’.

This piece of work was the ‘If I Can’ embroidery. Like much of his early work the inspiration for the design was medieval. He studied a number of sources especially the richly illuminated manuscripts of the period.

He and his new wife Janey Morris moved into their first home, Red House, in 1860 but for financial reasons they were only able to stay there for a few years. Its decoration was left incomplete. Plans had been made to decorate the staircase and hall with paintings in tempera of scenes from the Trojan War by the Pre-Raphaelite artist, Edward Burne-Jones. Other walls were to be covered with embroidered hangings carried out by the circle of friends including Janey Morris and Georgina Burne-Jones. The decoration of the house is cited as the inspiration for Morris’s firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. set up in 1861. The firm produced stained glass and objects for the home including pottery tiles, furniture, metalwork, wallpaper and textiles designed by artists. According to Violet Hunt, ‘Mrs Morris was famous for her embroidery and . . . laid with her needle the foundations of the firm’. Embroidered work quickly became a significant part of its output. Janey Morris’s sister, Bessie Burden, and her younger daughter, May, were all heavily involved in embroidery work.

Both William and May Morris were great collectors. Morris had a passion for books and manuscripts while his daughter collected reference pieces for her own work. These included so-called ‘peasant’ jewellery from Scandinavia and central Europe, textiles and embroideries. Some of these are preserved at Kelmscott Manor, near the town of Lechlade in Oxfordshire. The house was initially a summer retreat for the family but became May Morris’s permanent home towards the end of her life. There is a small group of Greek or Anatolian embroideries at Kelmscott. These include a length of cotton with an embroidered panel at each end. The design is made up of a repeating circular motif featuring stylized flowers and leaves worked in silk chenille and metallic threads. May Morris particularly admired the use of metallic flat tinsel used in such pieces. Another fragment of cloth is embroidered in silk on linen. It is a colourful design carried out in stem and chain stitch.

Another small collection of Greek embroideries with links to May Morris survives in the former home of Emery Walker at 7 Hammersmith Terrace, London. Walker was a printer and a close friend, neighbour and colleague of William and May Morris. Like them he had a wide

range of interests reflected in his collections. The embroideries include a Greek fragment, possibly from the Ionian islands, worked in silk and metallic threads on linen which was given by May Morris to Emery Walker. It is now framed but it is believed to have been a study piece used by May Morris to learn about different stitches. The use of contrasting outlines in this and other Greek designs was a feature that May Morris admired and introduced into some of her work. There are a number of other embroidery fragments at 7 Hammersmith Terrace which may have come from May Morris or may have been acquired by Walker himself when he took part in the trip to Greece in 1909 organised by the most influential Arts and Crafts organisation, the Art Workers Guild. They include a runner embroidered in red possibly from Crete and a fragment, now somewhat faded, of the typical red and blue silk on linen embroidery from the islands of the Dodecanese.

May Morris's examination piece, executed while she was a student at the South Kensington School of Design between 1880 and 1883, is also preserved at Kelmscott Manor. It is a runner in fine cotton with an embroidered panel in silk at each end. In 1885 at the age of 23, she became Manager of the embroidery section of Morris and Co. She contributed an essay on embroidery to the publication accompanying the 4<sup>th</sup> Arts and Crafts Exhibition in London in 1893 when she singled out Cretan and Turkish work for particular praise. Her own designs rely on natural forms, bold colours and tones, and more complex patterns than those produced by her father. They were influenced partly by the inspiration of natural forms – flowers and plants - but also by her interest in historic and traditional embroidery traditions including those from Greece.

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## **Nineteenth century European artists-travellers to Athens**

*by Dr Fani-Maria Tsigakou, Benaki Museum, Athens*

The idea of ancient Greece has had a profound and reverberating influence on the West: Indeed, for many centuries, to most Europeans Greece possessed an identity entirely in terms of its past, while the city of Pallas Athena was a vision that inspired cultivated minds in different ways, at different times. With the triumph of Christianity Athens- being wracked by one calamity after another- declined and sank into oblivion. However, in the mid-seventeenth century, it was rediscovered- as a symbol of artistic excellence- by western European travelers. Their written and pictorial records preserve valuable information about the city's topography and life.

Seventeenth century visitors to Athens found a useful aid in the first contemporary map of the town drawn by the Capuchin friars in 1670. During the same period, the first complete set of drawings of the Parthenon sculptures was executed by the French painter Jacques Carrey who visited Athens in 1674 as a member of the retinue of Louis XIV's special envoy, Marquis François-Olivier de Nointel. Carrey's drawings are of the outmost importance because only -just a few years later, in 1687- the temple was irreparably destroyed during the Veneto-Turkish war.



*Plan of Athens drawn by the Capucin Friars*  
Coloured engraving, 1675



*Nicholas Revett drawing the Herodeion*  
Engraving from *The Antiquities of Athens*, 1762

In the eighteenth century, it became possible for Western Europeans to approach ,in a more scholarly way, classical architecture, thanks to the efforts of the British Society of Dilettanti who, in 1751 sent to Athens James Stuart and Nicholas Revett both painters and architects, in order to study and make systematic pictorial records of the ancient monuments. The product of their collaboration was a three-volume luxurious edition entitled *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762-1816), that revealed to the European public the remains of classical Athenian monuments.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the establishment of the *Greek Revival* brought to Athens a great number of architects, because, at that time, the study of ancient Greek monuments was considered an essential part of the training for an architect. During that period, Athens became the fashionable meeting place for antiquarians, classical scholars and tourists of all nationalities .The Athens that unfolded before the visitor's eyes was no more than a large village of some 20.000 people with low, tiled-roofed houses, the monotony of which was relieved by palm trees, cypresses and minarets. The traveller was struck by the presence of ancient, ruined masterpieces next to oriental open fountains and a host of mosques.



*View of Athens from the Philopappus Hill*  
Oil-painting by Richard B. Harraden (1776-1862)



*View of Athens, 1817*  
Watercolour by Hugh William Williams (1775-1829)

Inevitably, architectural and archaeological interest led on to official or unofficial excavations and the removal of ancient works of art. The most spectacular case in point was Elgin's acquisition of the Parthenon marbles. In August 1800, Elgin's agent the Italian landscapist Giovanni Battista Lusieri was residing in Athens as head of a mission for the removal of the Parthenon marbles. They were purchased eventually by the British Museum in 1816. Elgin's activities were condemned by Lord Byron who, in 1809, was in Athens and three years later he published *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, a landmark in English poetry and in philhellenic literature.



*A General View of Athens*  
Oil-painting by Rudolph Muller (1802-1885)



*Distant View of Athens from the ancient Olive-Grove*  
Watercolour by William Page (1794-1879)

The original impetus for painting pictures of Athens was the monuments. However, by the early nineteenth century artists visiting the city were beginning to take an interest in the surroundings of those monuments, as well as in depicting the scenery within and around the ruins. There can be no doubt that the landscape of Athens, where stood ruins of worldwide significance, considerably influenced the Europeans' perception of the idea of



the Greek Landscape. Indeed, the landscape of Athenian history and myth was a spiritual landscape, a paradise of light and colour, the most complete expression of the human mind and spirit. But this, was not the landscape that nineteenth century visitors to Athens beheld. In fact, the vista of the impoverished natural Athenian landscape-the result of centuries of foreign occupation and destruction- disappointed visitors. As a result, European artists of the nineteenth century, trying to depict Athens as it was, while simultaneously being charged by their own pre-conceptions of its former glory, created imaginative pictures that intended to recreate the Athenian landscape that was described by ancient authors. Artists sped to correct and idealise the natural environment, in order to create pictures with an emotional and evocative atmosphere. Indeed, the more one investigates *Athenian Views*, one comes across compositions with well-known ruins arranged in a 'theatrical' setting and bathed in a golden glow: a visual cliché that was a standard means of calling up the Golden Age.

In this pictorial dream-world there was no place for contemporary allusions. Yet these, in general, were the pictures of Athens that stimulated the widespread and growing interest in the fate of the Greeks among Western Europeans in the early decades of the nineteenth century. And these same pictures obviously made a convincing impact, when the Greek Revolution broke up in 1821. It was finally the Greek War of Independence that replaced antiquarian *Athenian Views* with Athenian pictures in which the ruins that were depicted, did not just appeal to classicists, but meant to emphasize the presence of the classical past, which inspired the heroism of the modern Greek freedom-fighters.

The restoration of Athens as the capital of the new Hellenic kingdom, in 1833, prompted visiting artists to depict the city as it really was: a picturesque assortment of monuments of different periods within a beautiful landscape and under a limpid sky.



*View of the Acropolis from the Pnyx*  
Watercolour by Rudolph Muller (1802-1885)



*View of Athens from the river Ilissus, 1833*  
Watercolour by Johann Michael Wittmer (1802-1880)

The archive of pictures of Athens by foreign artists is an invaluable tool for the functioning of historical memory, because the desecration of Athens' natural environment, that occurred in the twentieth century destroyed the harmonious balance of the Attic landscape and its history, that delighted visitors of the past. At the same time, it is a heritage that stirs the viewer's imagination and sends it soaring on flights of fancy through time and space.

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